

Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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S E C R E T TUNIS 5842

LIMDIS

DEPT PASS NSC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, TS

SUBJECT: GOT REQUESTS ACCELERATED DELIVERY OF CHAPARRAL

1. SUMMARY: TUNISIAN DEFENSE MINISTER FARHAT HAS ASKED ME TO MAKE EFFORT "ON POLITICAL GROUNDS" TO OBTAIN USG RECONSIDERATION OF 30-MONTH DELAY IN DELIVERY OF CHAPARRAL MISSILES IN FAVOR OF ONLY 17-MONTH DELAY. HE INFORMED ME THAT GOT HAS ALSO DECIDED TO OBTAIN HIGHER ALTITUDE ROLAND. I RECOMMEND WE WORK OUT SOME COMPROMISE SYSTEM FROM FRENCH. END SUMMARY.

2. DEFENSE MINISTER ABDALLAH FARHAT REQUESTED ME TO CALL ON HIM AUGUST 19. I SAW HIM WITH ONLY AHMED BENNOUR, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENSE, PRESENT. OUR TALK LASTED 45 MINUTES AND WAS CHIEFLY DEVOTED TO GOT'S HOPE TO EXPEDITE PURCHASE AND DELIVERY OF CHAPARRAL AA SYSTEM. FARHAT CONFIRMED THAT GOT FULLY INTENDS TO PURCHASE CHAPARRAL SYSTEM (3 BATTERIES WITH 432 MISSILES) AS SOON AS FINAL P&A, LETTER OF OFFER PROCEDURES AND CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEEN ATTENDED TO, HOPEFULLY BY NOVEMBER. FARHAT

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AND BENNOUR INDICATED THEIR UNDERSTANDING RPT UNDERSTANDING (IF

NOT THEIR APPRECIATION) OF CURRENT DOD POLICY WHICH ENTAILS THIRTY-MONTH DELAY AFTER RECEIPT OF ORDER BEFORE MISSILES CAN BE DELIVERED.

3. FARHAT THEN SAID THAT GOT HAD RECENTLY DECIDED ALSO TO ACQUIRE FRENCH ROLAND AA SYSTEM (PROBABLY MARK II EFFECTIVE TO 21,000 FOOT ALTITUDE) TO SUPPLEMENT LOWER-LEVEL U.S. CHAPARRAL SYSTEM. ROLAND WOULD BE DELIVERED SOME TIME LATER THAN CHAPARRAL ALTHOUGH HE DECLINED TO SPECIFY HOW SOON. (CHUSLOT HAS LEARNED THAT DELIVERY DATE FOR ROLAND IS PROBABLY 1980.)

4. FARHAT AND BENNOUR THEN GOT TO PURPOSE OF MEETING WHICH THEY SAID WAS A FRANK PLEA ON "POLITICAL" GROUNDS FOR USG TO RECONSIDER ITS PRESENT POLICY INVOLVING TWO AND ONE-HALF YEAR DELAY IN FURNISHING MISSILES WHEREAS LAUNCHERS COULD BE DELIVERED BY AERONEUTRONICS FORD BY DECEMBER 1977 OR JANUARY 1978. PRESENT U.S. POLICY, IN EFFECT, WOULD LEAVE TUNISIA STILL DEFENSELESS AGAINST AIR ATTACK UNTIL WELL INTO 1979.

5. I WENT OVER REASONS FOR U.S. POLICY WHICH IS DESIGNED TO PREVENT RAPID DRAW-DOWN OF U.S. ARMY STOCKS BEFORE MISSILES SOLD ABROAD COULD BE REPLACED FROM NEW PRODUCTION. FARHAT AND BENNOUR AGAIN INDICATED THAT THIS HAD BEEN EXPLAINED FULLY BY CHUSLOT BUT POINTED BY WAY OF EXAMPLE TO AUSTRIA WHICH HAS JUST AGREED TO RELEASE ONE BATTALION OF PANZERJAGER LIGHT TANKS FROM ARMY STOCKS AS QUICK RESPONSE TO GOT'S URGENT NEED FOR MORE ADEQUATE DEFENSIVE ARMAMENT. SURELY, FARHAT SAID, USG, WHICH HAS RECENTLY GIVEN WELCOME INDICATIONS OF ITS CONCERN FOR TUNISIAN TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND SHOWN SOLIDARITY WITH GOT IN FACE OF EXTERNAL THREATS, COULD SEE ITS NEED FOR AA MISSILES IN PROPER POLITICAL CONTEXT AND RECONSIDER THE THIRTY-MONTH DELAY POLICY IN TUNISIA'S FAVOR. HE FELT SURE SOME COMPROMISE SHOULD BE POSSIBLE AND SUGGESTED A 17-MONTH AVAILABILITY AS A MORE TOLERABLE ALTERNATIVE. THIS, HE SAID, WAS THE CONSIDERED RECOMMENDATION OF HIS CHIEFS OF STAFF. IF MISSILE DELIVERIES COULD BE PROGRAMMED TO BEGIN ABOUT SAME TIME CHAPARRAL LAUNCHERS ARRIVED, GOT WOULD REST EASIER AND BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE TO TUNISIAN MILITARY AND PUBLIC OPINION THAT COUNTRY'S MODEST DEFENSE NEEDS WERE NOT BEING NEGLECTED. I TOLD MINISTER THAT I COULD ONLY SYMPATHIZE WITH HIS IMPATIENCE AND THAT I COULD ALSO APPRECIATE THE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF MAKING

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AN EARLY CONCRETE RESPONSE TO THE EXTERNAL THREAT. HOWEVER, I SAID, I WAS NOT SURE HOW MUCH COULD BE DONE AND HOW SOLIDLY CAST IN CONCRETE OUR MISSILE-DELIVERY POLICY ACTUALLY IS. I AGREED TO PASS HIS OBSERVATIONS ON TO WASHINGTON AND ASK FOR USG STUDY AND COMMENTS ON GOT'S PROBLEM.

6. COMMENT: I HAVE KEPT UP TO DATE ON ALL ASPECTS OF OUR CHAPARRAL CASE AND, LIKE FARHAT, UNDERSTAND STRATEGIC REASONS BEHIND NEED FOR

30-MONTH DELAY IN PROVIDING MISSILES. I HAVE AGAIN DISCUSSED THIS
TALK WITH CHUSLOT AND CONCLUDED THAT WE
SHOULD ASK STATE/NSC/DOD
TO SEE HOW MUCH CAN BE DONE TO ACCOMMODATE TUNISIA IN THIS REGARD.
I DO SO (A) OUT OF MY STRONG CONVICTION THAT AFTER NINE YEARS OF
TUNISIAN-U.S. MILITARY COLLABORATION WE WOULD HAVE TO HANG OUR
HEADS WHEN WE SAW HOW VERY INADEQUATE TUNISIA'S CURRENT DEFENSES
PROVED TO BE WHEN TESTED AND (B) OUT OF MY HUNCH THAT SOME MINOR
REPROGRAMMING OF CHAPARRAL MISSILE RELEASES--AT NO RPT NO ADDITIONAL
COST TO US--WOULD ENABLE US TO MAKE THE GOT AND OURSELVES LOOK
BETTER.

7. ACTIN RECOMMENDED: CHUSLOT AND I REQUEST THAT ABOUT SIXTY
CHAPARRAL MISSILES BE PROGRAMMED FOR DELIVERY TO TUNISIA WITHIN
ONE OR TWO MONTHS OF DELIVERY OF THE LAUNCHERS WITH THE BALANCE
DELIVERED OVER A PERIOD OF NOT LESS THAN 30 MONTHS. I WOULD

LIKE TO HAVE WASHINGTON'S CONSIDERED ANSWER WITHIN SHORTEST TIME
POSSIBLE.
MULCAHY

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